

REMARKS

Claims 1-24 are currently pending, wherein claims 2 and 7 have been amended to correct typographical errors. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the remarks presented herein below.

At the outset, Applicants submit herewith an English translation of Japanese Patent Application No. 2001-175806 filed June 11, 2001 from which the present application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. §119. A certified copy of the priority document was filed on April 25, 2003. Accordingly, Applicants have perfected their claim for priority with respect to said Japanese Application.

In paragraph 2, the Office Action objects to claims 2 and 7 because they appear to be missing the word "wherein" and "the" respectively. Claims 2 and 7 have been amended, thereby addressing the Examiner's concerns.

In paragraph 6, the Office Action rejects claims 1, 2, 15, 23 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0114570 to Matsumoto et al. ("Matsumoto"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US 2002/0114570 A1 has a publication date of August 22, 2002 and a filing date of June 27, 2001. Therefore, under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) Matsumoto is given the effect of prior art as of June 27, 2001. However, as noted above, Applicants have perfected their claim for priority from Japanese Patent Application No. 2001-175806 filed June 11, 2001. Accordingly, Matsumoto cannot be applied as prior art because the filing date of Matsumoto is after the priority date of the present application.

Therefore, the rejection of claims 1, 2, 15, 23 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) is improper.

In paragraph 7, the Office Action rejects claims 1, 2, 23 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0044743 to Takeuchi et al. ("Takeuchi"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US 2002/0044743 A1 has a publication date of April 18, 2002 and a filing date of September 27, 2001. Therefore, under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) Takeuchi is given the effect of prior art as of September 27, 2001. However, as noted above, Applicants have perfected their claim for priority from Japanese Patent Application No. 2001-175806 filed June 11, 2001. Accordingly, Takeuchi cannot be applied as prior art because the filing date of Takeuchi is after the priority date of the present application. Therefore, the rejection of claims 1, 2, 23 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) is improper.

In paragraph 9, the Office Action rejects claims 18 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Matsumoto. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. As discussed above, Matsumoto is not prior art under 35 U.S.C. §102 and therefore cannot be applied in a rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

In paragraph 10, the Office Action rejects claim 19 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Matsumoto further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,982,963 to Feng et al. ("Feng"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

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Again, Matsumoto is not prior art under 35 U.S.C. §102 and therefore cannot be applied in a rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

The application is in condition for allowance. Notice of same is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner have any questions regarding this application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at the telephone number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,

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